

By Mary Salas  
*Councilwoman, City of Chula Vista*

A year after the City of Chula Vista passed the Mills Act—an incentive to preserve historic homes—more than 1,300 visitors now have a greater appreciation for preservation efforts throughout Chula Vista.

Six local homeowners opened their homes last weekend to celebrate National Preservation Week, but also to show the outpouring of love and attention given to these historic sites. Visitors saw architectural styles ranging from Craftsman and Pueblo Revival, to Victorian and Tudor. Not meant to be a designer showcase, this tour was a way to encourage people to come together and help the homeowners fill in the missing pieces of their own piece of history.

The weekend was filled with touching stories of former residents bringing pictures of the historic homes they lived in during the 1920s. One former resident brought the current homeowner the original floor plans for the historic home. And in one of the most exciting discoveries of the weekend, Laura Smith—the 92-year-old owner of the William Sallmon House—was given a 1916 *San Diego Union* article that confirmed her Pueblo Revival home had been built by William Templeton Johnson, the same man who built the historic San Diego Trust and Savings building downtown. Such discoveries just add to the pedigree of Chula Vista housing stock.

These preservation labors of love validate my effort to pass the Mills Act in Chula Vista last year. Nearly 50 local homeowners are now saving 30 to 60 percent on their property tax bills, with those savings then poured back into the home's restoration. But it's not just about saving a buck. Laura and Albert Guerra can attest to that.

The Guerra's Tudor home is a restoration in progress. Visitors last weekend were able to see how the Guerras are blending their personal taste with the home's historic style. We anxiously await the review of the couple's recent application for historic designation status.

Chula Vista is lucky to have the dynamics of new development combined with a strong grassroots effort to preserve the city's past. We hope to learn even more about our city's rich history through a more comprehensive survey of the nearly 400 potential historic sites within Chula Vista, funded in part by money raised from this weekend's event.

This truly is an opportunity to do the right thing as we plan for the future.

*The Chula Vista Heritage Museum is sponsoring a workshop tonight, May 16, at 6 p.m. at the Chula Vista Civic Center Library to introduce homeowners to the benefits of historic designation.*

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